

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 20880 231130Z

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV SNAR TH

SUBJECT: MISSING NARCOTICS

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SUMMARY: EMBASSY INQUIRIES CONCERNING ALLEGED "RECYCLING" OF SEIZED HEROIN AND MORPHINE ARE CONTINUING. SOME PROGRESS IS BEING MADE IN IMPROVING MINISTRY OF HEALTH RECORD AND STORAGE PROCEDURES, BUT HARD FACTS RE PAST DISAPPEARANCES AND PRESENT ABUSES REMAIN OBSCURE. TENTATIVE CONCLUSION IS THAT DESTRUCTION OF SEIZED MORPHINE AND HEROIN SEEMS TO BE BETTER WAY OF DISPOSAL THAN SALE TO PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE EMBASSY IS CONTINUING ITS INQUIRIES INTO THE ALLEGED DISAPPEARANCE OF SEIZED HEROIN AND MORPHINE FROM THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH BETWEEN 1965 AND 1973. WHILE SOME PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE, THE TRUE STORY REMAINS OBSCURE. AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, IT HAS NOT YET BEEN DETERMINED WHEN THE NARCOTICS SUPPOSEDLY DISAPPEARED. THE MOST RECENT RTG COMMITTEE FORMED TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGED DISAPPEARANCE HAS EVEN RAISED THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THERE WERE ANY NARCOTICS MISSING AT ALL.

2. THERE APPARENTLY IS A LARGE AMOUNT OF NARCOTICS IN STORAGE AT THE MINISTRY WHICH IS UNINVENTORIED AND WHICH

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 20880 231130Z

THE MINISTRY CANNOT MATCH UP WITH SPECIFIC NARCOTICS

CASES. THE LATEST INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE CLAIMED THAT THIS REPRESENTED THE "MISSING" NARCOTICS AND THAT PREVIOUS INVESTIGATORS HAD MERELY CHECKED THOSE SEIZED NARCOTICS WHICH WERE PROPERLY INVENTORIED AND STORED.

3. WE ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT THIS EXPLANATION IS CORRECT. THE FIRST TWO INVESTIGATING COMMITTEES REPORTED THAT NARCOTICS WERE INDEED MISSING. THERE HAS BEEN NO REPORT ON THE AMOUNT OF SUPPOSEDLY UNINVENTORIED NARCOTICS IN STORAGE, AND WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN FIGURES ON THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF NARCOTICS SEIZED SINCE 1965. (IT MAY, IN FACT, PROVE IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN ACCURATE FIGURES AS RECORD-KEEPING HAS BEEN SLOPPY AND INADEQUATE.)

4. THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH HAS CORRECTED SOME OF ITS PROBLEMS AS A RESULT OF THE VARIOUS INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE MISSING NARCOTICS. THEY ARE KEEPING BETTER RECORDS AND IMPROVING THEIR INVENTORY SYSTEM, BUT STILL HAVE NOT BEGUN DESTRUCTION OF THE LARGE AMOUNTS OF NARCOTICS ON HAND. ALTHOUGH THE MINISTRY IS REQUIRED TO KEEP SEIZED DRUGS UNTIL A PARTICULAR CASE IS DISPOSED OF IN COURT, IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT NO TRIALS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED SINCE 1965, THE LAST YEAR WHEN ANY NARCOTICS WERE DESTROYED.

5. UNTIL CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS ARE COMPLETED IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE MINISTRY WILL BE ABLE TO DESTROY ANY OF ITS SEIZED NARCOTICS. WE INTEND TO CONTINUE TO EXPRESS CONCERN TO THE THAI OVER THIS ISSUE, AND TO URGE THE RTG TO REVISE ITS STORAGE AND DESTRUCTION PROCEDURES. WE ALSO INTEND TO PRESS FORWARD WITH EFFORTS TO DETERMINE THE FACTS BEHIND THE "MISSING" NARCOTICS, AND WILL INFORM THE DEPARTMENT AS THESE EFFORTS BEAR FRUIT. WE WISH TO EMPHASIZE THAT WE HAVE THUS FAR FOUND NO EVIDENCE THAT SEIZED NARCOTICS ARE ROUTINELY "RECYCLED" BY THAI OFFICIALS. THE "MISSING" NARCOTICS WERE ALLEGEDLY REMOVED FROM THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH STOREROOM BEFORE 1973, AND CIVIL SERVANTS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN INVOLVED HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED, RETIRED, OR FIRED.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 20880 231130Z

6. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION IN REF A CONCERNING POSSIBLE SALE OF SEIZED HEROIN AND MORPHINE TO PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES, IT DOES NOT AT PRESENT APPEAR TO BE A REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE DISPOSAL METHOD. WE UNDERSTAND THAT NO USEFUL DRUG CAN BE OBTAINED FROM REFINED HEROIN, AND NO LEGITIMATE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN IT. WHILE MORPHINE CAN APPARENTLY BE USED TO PRODUCE CODEINE,

IT IS A MORE DIFFICULT EXPENSIVE PROCEDURE THAN
USING OPIUM, AND THERE IS LITTLE MARKET FOR IT. AT
THIS TIME DESTRUCTION SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY PRACTICAL
WAY TO DISPOSE OF MORPHINE AND HEROIN.
WHITEHOUSE

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